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HUNGARY

Benő Csapó

Hungary is an industrialized country in Central Europe. Its present borders were created by the peace treaties signed after World War I, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated and Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory. Its population of 7.97 million in 1920 increased to 10.35 million by 1991 (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1992).

Hungary went through its most recent historical changes at the end of the 1980s. Then, like other Central and Eastern European countries, it became a pluralistic parliamentary democracy, and the process of transforming its centrally planned economy into a market economy began. The constitutional framework of the new political system was approved in October 1989, and the first free parliamentary elections were held in March 1990.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

The Postwar Period

The development of adolescence during the post-World War II period is strongly related to the main political and historical events. Teenagers and young adults played a central role in some (usually short, but decisive) periods, and the subsequent generations of the young acquired their social experiences in very different atmospheres.

For a short period after World War II, teenagers and young adults, many of them with left-wing views, were often referred to as the "generation of splendid winds." They took an active part in rebuilding the country and establishing the new social-political system. After the Communists assumed power and trans-

formed the political system into a totalitarian one at the end of the 1940s, many of the members of this generation either were actively involved as leading figures in the political events or were suffering their consequences. The revolution against the Communist regime and the Soviet presence in 1956 was ignited by a demonstration of university students, and thousands of teens and youths participated in the fighting against the Soviet troops. Countless members of the "generation of the young of '56" left the country after the suppression of the revolution or were put into prisons or concentration camps and received there character-forming experiences sufficient for a lifetime. Another characteristic generation appeared in the mid-1960s when a mild opening to the West started. This "great generation" distanced itself from the official state ideology and emphasized the values and attributes of the Western young of that time (non-conformism, beat music, blue jeans, long hair, etc.).

By the 1980s, different groups and subcultures had formed among adolescents, mirroring the processes of differentiation in the society. One of the most visible groups appeared among children of working-class families of low social and economic status (SES), who were mostly apprentices or young workers. Experiencing the large distance between the official ideology (which defined them as the future "ruling class") and their everyday problems, they became disillusioned and were characterized by a rather peaceful emptiness. Another group, less visible at that time, mostly college and university students and young intellectuals, attended the meetings and lectures of liberal thinkers of the "democratic opposition" held in private homes and played a leading role in the political changes at the end of that decade.

The collapse of the ideological structure of the previous political system, the sudden shift in the system of values transmitted by schools, may be a significant experience for young adolescents and teens. The systematic collection of data on these effects has just begun.

Demographic Data on Adolescence

The demographic history of adolescents was deeply affected by the political and historical events of the postwar period. Two important events resulted in demographic peaks. After a very modest baby boom in 1950 (162,000 births), the birth rate dropped slightly (in 1952: 156,000), and then the strict prohibition of abortion caused a peak in 1954 (192,000 births). The birth rate next gradually decreased (118,000 in 1962) but another peak was generated (190,000 births in 1975) by the combined effect of the sociopolitical incentives introduced in the mid-1970s and the arrival at marriageable age of the generation born in 1954. These demographic waves overloaded the school system and caused uneven employment difficulties.

Statistical sources present data on adolescents in three age groups: 10- to 14-year-olds, termed *young adolescents*, 15- to 19-year-olds, termed *teens*, and 20- to 24-year-olds, termed *young adults*. The proportion of adolescents (ages 10 to

Table 13.1
Proportion of Adolescents in the Hungarian Population (Percentage)

	Under 10 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20-24 years
1949	16.9	8.0	8.4	8.5
1970	13.1	8.0	8.9	7.5
1991	12.1	7.8	7.8	6.7

24) within the population is gradually decreasing; it was 22.3 percent in 1991 (Table 13.1).

The combined effect of the decreasing birth rate and increasing mortality rate led to a very unfavorable demographic situation by the mid-1980s; the decrease in the population was -2.1 per 1,000 in 1991. The growing mortality rate among young and middle-aged male adults has led to large differences in the life expectancies of women (73.7 years) and men (65.1 years). In 1990, 0.39 female and 1.01 male teens and 0.54 female and 1.50 male young adults died per 1,000 persons in the corresponding age groups. (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1992).

SOCIOCULTURAL PATTERNS OF THE "RITES OF PASSAGE"

Education

Education is compulsory until the age of 16. Eight years of elementary education is followed by three different forms of secondary education: classical grammar schools (4 years, 18 percent of the age group in 1988) offer academic tracks with general university preparatory functions; technical or secondary modern schools (4 years, 25 percent) combine college preparation with vocational training; and vocational schools (3 years, 43 percent) prepare for trades. This structure was stabilized around the mid-1960s, and the low level of investment in education has subsequently limited its development.

The stagnation led to an accumulation of tension which came to the surface after the political changes. The financial collapse of many large state firms destroyed the industrial background of vocational training and the restructuring of the economy requires new methods for instructing skilled workers. At the same time, the narrow capacity of academic secondary schools confronts the extension of higher education. Changes to the present structure are planned and a larger variety of schooling will appear. The present $8 + 4$, $4 + 8$, and $6 + 6$ year elementary + secondary forms seem to be the most frequent forthcoming academic tracks, while vocational training will begin after 10 years of compulsory education. The alteration of the usual patterns of education and the discussions about the future of the educational system have disturbed the orientation of many

adolescents and have made the transition between school and work harder for them.

The standards of elementary and academic secondary schools are rather high. In international comparisons, Hungarian students are usually among the best in mathematics and sciences, while their achievements are more modest in reading comprehension, language arts, and foreign languages.

Around 10 percent of 19-year-olds enter one or the other of the two major forms of higher education: colleges (3 or 4 years, approximately equivalent to a bachelor's degree) and universities (mostly 5 years, master's degree equivalent, 45 percent of higher education students). Students are selected for higher educational studies on the basis of entrance examinations; around one-quarter of the applicants are admitted. Other possibilities for postsecondary education (e.g., vocational training, about 3 percent) are very limited, and systematic graduate or doctoral training is still in an embryonic stage. Because of the low percentage of university students within the population and growing social pressure, there are plans to double the training capacity of universities.

Socially, the educational system is very selective. As a consequence of political planning, a large number of working-class children received higher education during the 1950s and 1960s, but social mobility has gradually been declining. In 1986, the proportion of children of manual workers at the vocational schools was 79 percent, and at the academic high schools only 36 percent (Lakatos, 1988).

Although the intellectual professions are underpaid, providing a good education for their children has been a basic value in most families. Many parents undertake additional work to finance their children's studies or to pay for extra private lessons to improve their children's chances of passing the very competitive university entrance examinations. High school graduation has recently become a real family occasion, as the student's success is celebrated in the circle of friends and relatives.

The proportion of female students both at academic high schools and among higher education students has been increasing significantly. In higher education, the proportion of female students in 1950 was 26 percent and it increased to 52 percent by 1988. The proportion of women is especially high among arts and literature students (77 percent), at teacher-training colleges (72 percent), at law faculties (57 percent), and at medical universities (54 percent). It is low in science (44 percent) and technical-engineering studies (16 percent) (for full-time students in 1988; Harcsa, 1990).

Both inside and outside the regular educational system, there have traditionally been several ways to select and support those who are gifted. There are three areas with particularly good opportunities for talented adolescents to develop their abilities and young Hungarians' achievements in these areas become known worldwide: mathematics, music, and some fields of sports. Young mathematicians are selected through a wide range of competitions and are trained in special classes or schools. Although neither music nor sports are of major significance

at regular schools, special music schools offer appropriate possibilities for talented children, and sports clubs lay emphasis on training the best prospects from a very early age.

Work

The timing and mode of the transition from the world of school into the world of work depend primarily on the type of education the child participates in. Apprentices spend a major part of their training at workplaces; their introduction to work begins at around the age of 15. Another large group, mostly technical secondary school students, appears on the job market at the age of 18 and higher education is typically finished at around the age of 23. In 1984, 42 percent of teens (ages 15 to 19) and 90 percent of young adults (ages 20 to 24) were already employed (Harcza, 1990).

Joblessness was an almost unknown, or at least socially insignificant, phenomenon in Hungary before 1990. As a result of the inefficient utilization of manpower, there was usually a shortage of labor. The school-work transition was a reasonably smooth procedure, with minor disturbances that were regarded as due to planning inadequacies. During the 1980s, the number of jobs offered for beginners decreased, and the time spent between the school graduation and the beginning of work increased (Lázár, 1988). In 1990, when the unemployment rate was only 2.5 percent, the proportion of adolescents within the jobless group was already high: 28.4 percent of unemployed women and 18.8 percent of unemployed men were between 14 and 19, and 15.4 percent of the jobless women and 16.6 percent of the jobless men were between 20 and 24 years (Fóti, Lakatos, and Mészáros, 1991).

This situation changed dramatically between 1990 and 1992, with a more than 10 percent unemployment rate. The situation in some areas of industry is so bad that it is almost impossible to find a job. This problem affects unskilled youngsters or those graduating from vocational schools the most. At the same time, there is a large demand for trained personnel in services and business. Foreign language knowledge, computer literacy, and business administration skills are highly appreciated in the job market.

Family

Leaving the family home and establishing a separate existence show a variety of patterns, which are generally influenced by three major (not fully independent) factors: (a) timing of financial independence, which depends on the type of education the adolescent has; (b) means for finding separate accommodation; and (c) differences between urban and rural areas. In general, the longer the period of schooling, the longer adolescents have to rely on their parents' financial support, although higher education students usually live away from their parents.

Table 13.2

The Proportions of the Adolescent Age Groups in Marriages, Divorces, Births, and Abortions in 1990 (Percentage)

Age group	Marriages		Divorces		Births	Abortions
	Females	Males	Females	Males		
-14	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.4
15-19	27.4	5.6	1.3	0.1	12.1	12.9
20-24	44.1	48.1	16.8	7.6	39.4	19.1

In villages, housing is a less crucial problem, and parents can usually offer more help in the building of a home.

Many parents regularly continue to help after their children marry. In a 1984 survey, 20 percent of young couples reported that their parents helped in their everyday household, 17 percent in major repair work, and 33 percent in taking care of the grandchildren.

Children in Hungary tend to maintain a close relationship with their parents and (especially in rural regions) with their relatives. After the "stormy" teen years, young adults usually consolidate their connections with their parents and prefer to settle down nearby. If they live in areas away from their parents, young adults visit them frequently and their children often spend holidays with the grandparents.

Young adolescents face growing problems if their parents divorce or separate. In 1984, 13 percent of the 10- to 14-year-olds did not live together with both parents (Harcza and Molnár, 1986).

The average age at marriage in 1990 was 24.4 for females and 27.4 years for males; 71.6 percent of the females and 53.7 percent of the males in all marriages were adolescents (under 24) (see Table 13.2). The average age at marriage is slowly rising (especially among women), mostly because of the longer duration of education.

The rate of divorce is remarkably high in Hungary. This contributes both to the unfavorable demographic situation and to socialization problems for the children of the separating families. There were 37 divorces for every 100 new marriages in 1990; 18.1 percent of the females and 7.7 percent of the males involved in divorces were below age 24 (Table 13.2).

The abortion rate is also very high in Hungary (72 abortions per 100 births), and is rising among young adolescents and teens. While only 0.1 percent of abortions involved young adolescents and 9.4 percent teens in 1970, the corresponding figures had increased to 0.4 percent and 12.9 percent by 1990. At the same time, the proportion of young adults among all those having abortions fell from 24.7 percent to 19.1 percent (Table 13.2). For every 1,000 female

teens there were 31, and for every 1,000 young female adults, there were 51 abortions in 1990.

For every 1,000 females of the given age, there were 1.4 births to mothers aged 14, 6.5 births to those aged 16, 34 births to those aged 17, and 59 births to those aged 18. In 51.7 percent of births, the mothers were less than 24 (Table 13.2). Altogether, 13 percent of the births occurred out of wedlock.

The birth rate per woman has gradually been decreasing; in 1990 it was 1.84 births per woman (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1992).

Cultural Participation, Media Use

The mode of cultural participation depends mainly on age. Young adolescents usually attend cultural events with their family or within the framework of school organizations, while teens and higher education students tend to participate in cultural activities in peer or subculture groups.

In a 1984 survey, 24 percent of teens reported that their family regularly attended the theater and exhibitions, and 35 percent went to the cinema (Harcza and Molnár, 1986). Theater performances are regularly organized for children and youth: in 1989, 28 percent of all theater performances were held for adolescents (Prumek, 1990).

Children spend quite a lot of time watching television or listening to the radio. In 1979, 9- to 11-year-olds spent 6 hours listening to the radio, and 14 hours watching television each week. The corresponding data for 12- to 14-year-olds were 10 and 17 hours, and for 15- to 17-year-olds 13 and 15 hours, respectively (Dankánics, 1985). A more recent survey (Seregi, Tomai, and Szöke, 1989) which examined the weekend activities of young adolescents found that on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 90 percent of the children spent a relatively long time watching television: 3 to 5 hours per day on average.

In 1989, 6.5 percent of the program time of the three national radio channels was targeted particularly at adolescents. For the two national TV channels, 3.3 percent of the time was for children, 1.2 percent for the young, 1.2 percent school television, and 5 percent science popularization programs (Prumek, 1990).

In a large part of the country it is possible to watch TV channels from neighboring countries. There has been a new experience for adolescents since the beginning of the 1990s: the widespread access to Western European and international satellite channels, and the proliferation of city and community cable networks. Thus, the influence of local and international programs will increase.

Many families obtained a VCR between 1989 and 1992 and the spreading of videocassette shops and rentals took place within an even shorter time. Most cassettes circulate through uncontrolled channels and neither the families nor the schools have been prepared for the suddenly wide availability of pornography, horror, and crime films for young adolescents and teens.

Leisure, Life-Style

The life-style of young adolescents has changed with the changing cultural and economic background of the families. In a 1984 survey covering 1 percent of 15- to 35-year-olds, 43 percent of the teens and 31 percent of the young adults answered that they regularly took a holiday, 32 percent of the teens and 24 percent of the young adults had been abroad as children, 37 percent of teens and 31 percent of young adults regularly went on weekend excursions with their families, and 9 percent of teens and 7 percent of young adults attended sports events together with their families (Harcza and Molnár, 1986). The differences in the data on teens and young adults approximately reflect the increase in family participation in those activities during 5 years of the 1970s.

Western European youth has always been the model for Hungarian adolescents. The opening of the borders at the end of the 1980s and the widespread availability of Western media (satellite TV channels, videos, movies, records, newspapers, and books) brought the Western life-style closer. At the beginning of the 1990s, there was little difference in the dressing habits, fashion, and dancing styles of Hungarian and Western European youth, although the most expensive items (cars and expensive travel) are still not readily available.

Differences in youth subcultures became more visible during the 1980s. In contrast with the previous tendency, when mainly one dominant style (e.g., beat or hippie) influenced the young, a wide range of different subculture groups has appeared: "csöves" (a late and specific Hungarian mutation of the hippie mentality), pop, rock, punk, new wave, skinhead, and so on (Rácz, 1989). Recently, a growing circle (young entrepreneurs and managers) has been able to afford the attributes of the yuppie style. Several religious groups have been formed both within the Christian and Jewish traditions and outside them (e.g., Oriental religions). The influence of Green and other alternative movements is also growing among the young.

An interesting aspect of the subcultures is the movement that began around the end of the 1970s to revitalize folk-art traditions. At the beginning, the youngsters were inspired by certain popular beat music groups who integrated folk music motifs into their own music. Later, dance halls where young bands played original folk music on original instruments and youngsters taught each other traditional dances become popular.

Tendencies to uniformization can also be observed among the young. Many local beat music bands were established in the 1960s (practically each school, village, or club had its own poorly equipped one) to play their own numbers at Sunday afternoon parties. Since the 1970s discos that offer the same international hits have become the most popular locations for dancing.

Hungarian adolescents usually start dating at around the age of 14 or 15. In a survey among Hungarian teens concerning their sexual experiences, 48 percent of the girls and 43 percent of the boys answered "only kissing," 14 percent and 12 percent answered "petting as well," and a quarter (girls 26 percent and boys

24 percent) had had experiences of sexual intercourse (Szilágyi and Németh, 1988). Another survey (Czeizel, 1989) found that the average age for the first kissing was 15.7 for girls and 15.1 years for boys, that for first petting was 17.3 for girls and 15.7 for boys, and that for the first sexual intercourse was 19.5 years for girls and 18.5 years for boys.

Political Socialization and Political Participation

Under the socialist system, the political activity of the young was restricted to the officially controlled organizations. Although the membership was high, chiefly among secondary and high-school students, participation was quite formal. The erosion of these organizations began in the mid-1970s and (in parallel with the weakening of the ideological basis of the political system) accelerated during the 1980s. After the political changes, the newly established parties started to create their own youth organizations, and the revitalization of earlier youth organizations (e.g. the Boy Scouts movement) is in progress.

Political socialization under the socialist system of children and adolescents has been an ambivalent process. Young adolescents answered differently when they were asked which the "happy" countries were, and where they would like to live. They named the socialist countries among the "happy" ones, but generally chose one of the Western countries to live in (Szabó and Csepeli, 1984; Szabó, 1991).

Teens and young adults differentiated public and private expressions of their opinions more consciously. Dysfunctional socialization rarely led to a direct confrontation with the system, although in the 1970s and 1980s there were many signs indicative of the problems, such as the growing number of adolescents belonging to apolitical subculture groups or denouncing institutional values and the spontaneous demonstrations of 15 March (the day commemorating the 1848 revolution).

One phenomenon in present Hungarian politics is *Fiatalkorú Demokraták Szövetsége*—Alliance of Young Democrats) (FIDESZ), a liberal political party of the young. It was the first new political party, established in March 1988 (when the governing Communist party was still strong and in power) by a group of students and young intellectuals. In the 1990 election, they won 9 percent of the votes, gaining twenty-one seats in Parliament. Their work in Parliament has given the party an image of professionalism, competence, and expertise, and their style (touched with playfulness and humor) has made them the most popular party in Hungary (some polls in 1992 indicated that their popularity was around 50 percent). Although many of their supporters (not the members; membership is limited to those under 35 years of age) are from the older generations, the lack of a large party organization behind them will make it hard for them to translate their popularity into votes at the next general election.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEM BEHAVIORS

Smoking and Alcohol and Drug Consumption

Smoking and alcohol consumption are the most common forms of health-compromising behavior in Hungary. Smoking begins early: 14.5 percent of female teens and 19 percent of male teens smoked in the mid-1980s. Among young adults, the proportion of smokers among men remained about the same (19.6 percent) but it increased in the case of women (20.2 percent). As for alcohol consumption, 0.3 percent of female and 2.3 percent of male teens regularly consumed alcohol; the corresponding data for young adults are 0.8 percent for females and 7.8 percent for males. Regular alcohol consumption is associated with heavy smoking in almost every case (Aszmann, 1986) and is a source of social problem behavior (Rácz, 1989).

Drug consumption habits have changed dramatically during the last decade. Adolescent narcomania began to come to the surface around 1975. Because of relative isolation, currency exchange problems, and the narrow market, Hungary was not a target country for international drug trafficking at that time. As the availability of hard drugs was very low, drug abuse began with sniffing the vapor of glues and lacquers. Later, the consumption of alcohol combined with tranquilizers and sleeping pills took over, and then, around the mid-1980s, hard drugs began to spread (Farkasinszky, 1988). A survey of 120 drug consumers (Elekes, 1991) reported short frequent sniffing in twenty-six cases, long frequent sniffing in twenty-two cases, rare sniffing of glues in twenty-one cases; use of cannabis in seventeen cases, pharmaceuticals in sixteen cases, and opiate in ten cases, and occasional drug consumption in seven cases.

Mental Health Problems

In an international comparative study, 5,087 young adolescents (aged 11 to 13) were asked to rate their own health condition (Aszmann, 1989). Only 16 percent of the girls and 23 percent of the boys considered it "very good." These were the lowest ratings in the eleven participating countries. At the same time, the "not healthy" evaluation was also lowest among the Hungarian adolescents, and consequently the "OK" rating was the highest. Details of the examination showed that the psychic and psychosomatic complaints of Hungarian adolescents were not more frequent than those of adolescents in other countries. Another study (Kopp, Skrabski, and Czakó, 1990) indicated a rise in the number of neurotic cases between 1983 and 1988. While only 11 percent of the 16- to 19-year-olds reported neurotic complaints (headache, anxiety, depression, or heart or stomach problems) in 1983, in 1988, 21 percent of that age group had similar complaints.

Although acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) cases have occurred mostly in specific circles (in 1990 there were 213 registered human immuno-

deficiency virus [HIV] positive individuals in Hungary, of whom 130 were homosexual or bisexual, and only 10 were infected through heterosexual contact), adolescents are aware of the danger. In 1987, AIDS was the third most frequent disease mentioned by university students who were asked to name chronic and dangerous diseases (Simon & Till, 1988). In 1989, elementary and vocational school students mentioned AIDS second most often while high-school and university students listed it third. In general, more than 10 percent of adolescents mentioned a fear of AIDS (Simon et al., 1990).

The suicide rate is extremely high in Hungary (44 per 100,000 in 1990; 72 percent males), including among adolescents. The rate is 2 per 100,000 for 7- to 14-year-olds and 29 per 100,000 for 15- to 39-year-olds (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1992). Suicidal behavior is particularly high among drug consumers. In the survey by Elekes (1991), 46 percent of drug consumers had attempted suicide at least once, and 24 percent of them at least twice.

Lawbreaking

Around 80 to 90 percent of adolescent crimes in Hungary are committed by males. The number of criminal cases has been increasing for males and stagnating or increasing slightly for females in almost every age group. In the 14- to 17-year-old age group, the number of convictions per 100,000 youngsters was 1,251 for males and 219 for females in 1965; it changed to 1,840 and 214, respectively, by 1988. The corresponding figures for the 18- to 19-year-olds were 3,074 males and 493 females in 1965, and 3,299 males and 423 females in 1988; for the 20- to 24-year-olds they were 2,619 males and 492 females in 1965, and 2,504 males and 416 females in 1965.

Property crimes (mostly theft and robbery) accounted for 69 percent and crimes of violence (aggressive behavior, assault, homicide, attempted homicide, etc.) for 17 percent of the convictions involving 14- to 18-year-olds in 1988. The corresponding data for the 20- to 24-year-olds were 46 percent involving property and 15 percent violent (Harcza, 1990). Adolescent crimes are strongly correlated with low education and low socioeconomic status of the parents (Vavró, 1990). The proportion of adolescent crimes is higher in rural than in urban areas (Dávid, 1988).

Extremist Political Behavior

Under the socialist system, the emergence of any kind of political activity outside the officially organized forms was inhibited. The political changes gave rise not only to democratic movements but to extremism as well. The growing aggressiveness of skinheads is marked by sporadic attacks on foreigners. The increases in joblessness, uncertainty, and living difficulties and the growing numbers of African and Asian immigrants and refugees may fuel these extremist movements.

POLICY MATTERS

Youth policy has been concerned with the aspect of social policy related mostly to welfare and social support issues. Another aspect of youth policy is that of legislative and administrative questions of ensuring equal opportunities and rights of the young and reflecting the specific needs of the younger generation. This latter was given a legislative framework in the Law on Youth in 1971 (Law IV of 1971). Although there were mostly political and ideological motives behind the law and it has not been fully implemented, its declarations highlight some unsolved problems and offer a frame of reference for youngsters arguing for their own interests at the local and institutional levels. In some fields, the young have been quite effective in gaining representation in the decision-making processes. For example, one-third of voting members of the university senates are elected from among the students. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNO, New York, November 20, 1989) was approved by Parliament in 1991 (Law LXIV of 1991).

General social policy mainly affects adolescents in three ways: (a) young adolescents receive benefits through their families, (b) young adults receive support through the family policy when they become parents, and (c) youth concerns are directly addressed by certain social programs.

Parents receive a family allowance for each of their children until they reach the age of 16 in general, or until 20 if the child is still a student. The amount per child is usually around one-quarter to one-third of the minimum wage but is higher if there are more children in the family, the parent is single, the child has a chronic disease, and so on. Large families (with three or more children) enjoy further benefits and support, such as preference in receiving low-cost community accommodation and reduced public transportation rates. Families with children receive financial support for buying or building a home (the amount per child is approximately equal to the minimum wage for 2 years).

Mothers can stay at home for maternity leave until the child is age 3 (until the age of 10 in the case of a chronically ill or handicapped child) and receive a child care allowance during this time. From the second year, parents have the right to decide whether the mother or the father will take this leave. The amount of money received per child is around half to two-thirds of the minimum wage. Another option is to receive 65 percent of the previous wage for the first 2 years.

Adolescents are direct recipients of several benefits. To mention only a few: Children receive subsidized meals at schools, full-time students can travel at a reduced rate, secondary school students receive low-cost accommodation in dormitories if needed, and students at vocational schools receive a monthly grant. Higher education tuition is free and students receive a regular grant which depends on the economic situation of their parents and their own scholastic achievements. On average, this support covers around half of their living expenses.

Governmental organizations, recently reorganized under new names (e.g., State Youth Office, State Youth Committee, and State Youth and Sports Office),

deal with specific youth issues. The youth care network runs homes, dormitories, and boarding schools for orphans or for those abandoned or endangered by their parents. This network takes care of the adolescents (around 30,000 children in the country) up to the age of 18, but such young adults then face difficulties in setting up on their own.

The number of schools run by the churches, private organizations, or foundations is increasing. Independent youth organizations have only recently begun to spread, and thus a growing impact of the autonomous groups on youth policy and a greater influence in the life of adolescents can be expected.

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